

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-9 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 5 are amended herein.

The claims have been amended in order to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter to which the applicant regards as his invention.

In the Advisory Action dated November 26, 2003, the Examiner indicates that the amendment to claim 1 to recite "the resol resin composition does not contain AlCl_3 " raises issues under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Applicants therefore have amended claim 1 to remove this recitation and to replace the transitional phrase "comprising" with "consisting essentially of" in lines 1-2 of the claim.

Applicants submit that this amendment distinguishes from Engen et al. Engen et al. in column 12, lines 14-18, discloses that "Ammonium sulfate ..., ammonium peroxydisulfate ... and **ammonium thiosulfate** ... are deemed suitable for use in the invention as useful ammonium ion salts when used **specifically in combination with AlCl_3** as cocatalyst" (emphasis added).

In addition, Engen et al. discloses that its binder is formed from a binder precursor that comprises a blend of an urea-aldehyde resin and a water dilutable resol phenolic resin, the resin being catalyzed by an acid catalyst. The use of an acid catalyst indicates that this curing system is an **acidic** curing system. By contrast, claim 1 recites a composition that consists essentially of resol phenol resin (A), alkali earth metal oxide and/or metal hydroxide (B) and ammonium thiosulfate (C). This is therefore an **alkaline** system.

In addition, in the Advisory action, the Examiner indicated that the word "type" raised issues under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. The word "type" has been deleted in claims 1 and 5.

The above amendments are believed to place the claims in proper condition for examination. Early and favorable action is awaited.

In the event that any fees are due in connection with this paper, please charge our Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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